

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

March 10, 2005

Members Present: Jean Haggerty, *Chair*; Doris Holden, *Treasurer*; Elsie Fetterman, Barbara Sutherland, Al Byam, Henry Peirce

Absent: Susan Whitbourne, Frank Lattuca

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Interim Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Program Director/Services), Karen Erman (Management Assistant), Marlene Barnett (Program Coordinator)

Others: Ferne Finger (Lunch Site Manager), Marge Babb, Gerald Weiss (Select Board Liaison-arrived late)

Welcome

Meeting called to order at 9:05 AM. Jean welcomed all members and guests

Minutes of Meeting

Minutes of February 17, 2005, were reviewed and accepted as written.

SENIOR TRUST

Treasurer's Report:

Doris Holden reported that the balance in the checking account is \$966.65. There were two checks written for scholarships. The total assets are \$89,037.60. The CD with Edward Jones matures next week. The interest rate is a little over 3%. Doris asked if she should reinvest the money. Nancy advised Doris that the money should not be reinvested in a CD at this time in the event that the money might be transferred into a Town managed account. The Treasurer's report was accepted as written.

Update on Resolution of Fundraising Issue:

Nancy summarized the trail she has been following to understand and resolve the issues related to the Senior Trust and fundraising. In the guidelines for COA members, the Department of Elder Affairs stated that "COA fundraising is not permitted." Nancy then attended a Mass Council on Aging Conference where the Assistant Attorney General suggested amending the Trust By-Laws to allow for more non-COA members and then have the COA appoint these people to be a "Friends" group to raise the money. Nancy shared all this information with Town Counsel, Alan Seewald, who called Jaimie Katz at the Public Charities Division of the Attorney General's Office, an Attorney at the Dept. of Revenue, General Counsel to the State Ethics Commission and Emmett Schmarsow at the Department of Elder Affairs. He found out *"there is no legal prohibition against COA members serving as Trustees of the Senior Trust. However, where the members of the COA are the Trustees, the Trust is not a private trust, but a quasi-public entity. Therefore the funds obtained by the Trust would be public funds that must be maintained and invested by the Town Treasurer, not the Treasurer of the Trust. In the alternative, the Trust could become a truly private entity of eliminating the provisions of the Senior Trust which provide for members of the COA being Trustees."* Counsel Seewald further suggested that Barry *"be consulted on these alternatives to devise a plan of action to bring either the handling of the money or the membership of the Trust into accordance with the requirements of law."*

Therefore, to resolve the problem the COA has two choices:

1. Have the Senior Trust Account maintained by the Town Treasurer, or
2. Change the Trust By-laws so that the people who control the money are not COA members.

Hank Peirce moved to table the discussion until the next COA meeting when there is more information on how to proceed. The issue was tabled.

OLD BUSINESS

Nominating Committee:

Barbara Sutherland, Doris Holden and Frank Lattuca are on the nominating committee. There are three COA members whose terms are expiring at the end of June. Jean has indicated that she will accept another term if appointed but would prefer not to be Chair. Jean believes that the COA needs someone who is good in finance and/or grant writing. The tasks ahead for the nominating committee are to speak to any member whose term is expiring in June regarding their intent to remain on the COA, speak to any potential candidates and recommend to Barry people to fill any vacancy.

Comprehensive Planning Committee Representative:

Jean spoke with Arnold Friedman, Member-At-Large of the Comprehensive Planning Committee, and he has agreed to serve as the COA's liaison to this committee. He was also asked if he was interested in becoming a member of the COA and declined for time constraint reasons.

MCOA Quarterly Meeting:

Barbara Sutherland, Marlene Barnett and Susan Waite are going to attend the MCOA quarterly meeting which is being held on Monday, March 14th in West Springfield. The meeting should be interesting as it is called "*Boomers, Boomers, Everywhere: But can you get them involved in your Senior Center?*" Marlene will report at the next meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

FERNE

- **Lunch Room Update:**

Ferne reported that four seniors went to the monthly Highland Valley Site Council meeting to represent the Amherst meal site and meet with the HVES Nutrition Director to discuss the program. This meeting went very well and the seniors who went are willing (and even eager) to attend again.

- **Tablecloths:**

Ferne reported that last fall the Senior Center Club held a Holiday Bazaar to raise money to buy new vinyl, lined tablecloths for the lunch room. The bazaar was a success in a large part to the work and organization of Parvin Niroomand. The new tablecloths, which cost \$987.45, have arrived and folks are pleased with them. Jean suggested that a letter of thanks go out to Parvin Niroomand for her major role.

NANCY

- **Budget Process:**

There has been no news on the budget process. Nancy is hoping that Maura will continue to be funded full-time for the Senior Center and the Senior Center/COA budget that goes to Town Meeting will not be as problematic. She should hear before the end of March what the figures are that will come before Town Meeting.

MAURA

- **Volunteers-Susan Waite & Megan McCarthy:**

Maura told the members that Susan Waite, an Amherst resident who has a lot of experience with fundraising for United Way and many computer skills, and Megan McCarthy, a student at UMass, have been volunteering at the Senior Center. They are working on a Power Point presentation for the Senior Center and the Town clean up day, "Into Amherst". If the Power Point Presentation is ready for Town Meeting, it will be used at that time. They will be taking pictures and Maura has given them a lot of information to compile for the presentation. The Power Point presentation will help people to understand that what the Senior Center has to offer because many people do not understand what goes on there. The Power Point presentation can also be used for fundraising.

Elsie pointed out that perhaps the number of volunteers could be put in the monthly statistics. Also, she wonders why St. Brigid's exercise statistics are in the report as this is a private business. Nancy explained that originally the program was a Senior Center program and it outgrew the Senior Center. It has been a cooperative venture and in the summer the instructor teaches in the Senior Center. Historically we are part of that program. Elsie also suggested that the activities and the services of the Senior Center be put on ACTV. Elsie suggested to Maura that the statistics on volunteers be put on the monthly statistic report. Maura agreed that this was a good idea.

- **Kindred Spirits:**

Maura explained that the "*Grandparents As Parents*" group has changed its name to "*Kindred Sprits*" because the participants of the program felt that the name was not inclusive enough.

MARLENE

- **Wednesday Bread & Produce Program:**

Marlene explained the changes in the Bread & Produce Program food distribution set-up. There are still only eight people let into the room at one time. The tables are set up in a loop and all the produce and bread is packaged. There is no waste. Any food left over goes to the Baptist Church. Also, Eunice takes a box of food to Chestnut Court. Ren Srey has gotten some of the Cambodian Community to come to the program. There are three student volunteers, members of the advisory committee and others who help on Wednesday morning.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Transportation:

- **PVTA budget Update:** Al Byam reported that the PVTA budget has been leveled funded. The Federal Transportation Bill is now in the House and needs to be passed by the end of May. On the State level, the Governor has proposed a 1M cut to PVTA, to be funded at the FY '01 level. This will mean there will be a menu of cuts. Generally, this will probably mean the elimination of the Sunday bus service and the van service hours will be cut. Extra service on Saturday, Sunday and late nights will possibly be cut back. Jean stated that she hopes that the town will still be subsidizing the cost of the van tickets.

Reflecting on what Al Byam just reported on the PVTA situation, Nancy expressed her concern about further cuts. For many elders the van service is an essential service. If it was eliminated or cut back further, it would be devastating. Nancy said it makes her head spin to think about going back in the transportation business. This is a big worry.

Elsie asked whether the Senior Center has a list of people who are willing to drive needy people to appointments, etc. Nancy stated that Maura has a list of community volunteers who do this. It is possible that the Senior Center would need to expand this and be more aggressive.

- **Van Update:** Nancy reported that she just finished a very long report on the van for the Office of Construction & Transportation which is an annual report. She also received a request from the Ann Whalen's Tenant Association to use the van for an outing. She feels that to expand the use of the van would be a good idea.

HVES

Barbara Sutherland reported on the March 7th Highland Valley Elder Services meeting that she and Elsie Fetterman attended. Doug Hammond, Relief Resources, presented work that is being done on the development of a Caring Community Guide. He is seeking input for the Guide's final form.

Elsie brought up a discussion on really knowing who your Private Care Attendant (PCA) is. This should be a trusted person and one should be very careful in knowing who is working for you as a PCA.

NEW BUSINESS

Long Range Plan Discussion:

Jean stated that we as a Council need to know where we are going and what we need to do to get there. Al stated that he has a template that the COA can use. The spaces need to be filled in.

Nancy said that a broader discussion is needed at a future date and not at a regular business meeting. Some of the issues that need to be looked at are:

- The upcoming needs of "The Boomers".
- Adult daycare.
- Social worker(s) that can handle all of the upcoming needs of seniors.
- Transportation needs.
- More space for Senior Center Programs.
- A specialized plan to have people more integrated into the Senior Center.

Elsie reminded Nancy that Susan Whitbourne offered her students to do a Needs Assessment. This should be followed up. Nancy stated that the Senior Center is hoping to begin assessing the needs of people who are age 90 and above to see what the unmet needs are.

Further Budget Update from Gerry Weiss:

Gerald Weiss, who joined the meeting a little late, asked if he could comment on the budget situation. He said that he heard some comments after Nancy's presentation to the Select Board. They were:

- Why is the Senior Center looking for more people to serve when they cannot serve the population they have now? *Referring to the outreach study staff are planning for people 90+ years in Town)*
- Why is the Senior Center serving people who are not residents? *(Elders from area towns attend a majority of S.C. activities. We do not screen participants.)*

Gerry stated that he advocated for the Senior Center and explained that the Status Quo budget is a reduced budget and the Needs Budget is really a level-funded budget since the Senior Center has been cut steadily over the past few years.

The budget picture as a whole for Amherst is a concern. Because the reserves have been spent down so much, the Town's bond rating was in jeopardy. The Town Manager and Finance Director went to New York to argue against the rate being lowered just a few weeks ago. Fortunately they were successful in keeping it at the same level for now. The decision-makers in NYC (who determine our rating) will be watching to make sure the long range plan for the use of our reserves and the future restoration plan is maintained.

Gerry said he will argue at Town Meeting for a Needs Budget for the Senior Center.

Al Byam suggested that if the Senior Center is going to do a pre-town meeting letter, that we need to ask for the Needs Budget because this is not an increased budget. Gerry agreed that we need to make a case that this is a budget to restore cuts; cuts that have been devastating to the Senior Center and its programs. The letter needs to talk about what is missing, what the needs are and to make sure that it is known that this is the bare minimum that the Senior Center needs.

Al suggested that the COA have an extra meeting in June to go over the long-range plan because we need to know what the budget outcome is first before discussing this matter.

Update of COA By-Laws:

A subcommittee is needed to update the COA by-Laws. Jean and Doris volunteered to work on the update and report back to the COA members.

FY '05 Fundraising:

It was decided to wait for the Town Manager's recommendation before doing any fundraising.

Next Meeting is April 14, 2005 at 9:00 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 AM.

**Respectfully submitted,
Karen Erman, Management Assistant**